

Scraped Knees and Sunflower Seeds

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Summary: An X-File involving young Canadian actors gets Mulder longing for a lost childhood. His wishes do not go unheeded. Up to Ch. 8

1. Part One

****Scraped Knees and Sunflower Seeds****

> An X-Files Fanfiction by > Taryn "Jnco" Wander'r.
<a>
>
 Stay tuned for legalities and author's note.
>
 SCRAPED KNEES AND SUNFLOWER SEEDS.
>

I wish that I'd noticed all the postponements you'd said
> I never told you, you were the one I believed.
 If I touched you would you push my hand away?
> If I listened would I have heard the things that made me run away?
 I miss you more than words could ever say.
> I miss you every single empty day.
 -Econoline Crush
'Razorblades and BandAides'
>
 Dressing up in costumes, playing silly games
> Hiding out in tree tops, shouting out rude names
 Whistling tunes we hide in the tiers by the seaside
> Whistling tunes we wish on the trees in the jungle
 -Peter Gabriel 'Games Without Frontiers'
>

>
 Seattle, Washington
> June 6. 3:15 AM.

> Flourescent lights illuminated the concrete where old cars passed, lazily, stopping to fuel up. Caspin pushed another strip of sugared blue candy into her mouth.

> "So," Began Madison, leaning against the back wall of the Exxon Station. "Would you rather live in Gotham City or Metropolis?"

> The two teenaged girls sat outside on the warm summer night, daring a brief summer thunderstorm to show it's face; waiting for their friend inside.

> "Hmmm," Caspin managed around a mouthful of candy. "Probably Gotham City."

> "Good choice," her friend agreed. Madison screwed the top of her Pepsi bottle back on and stood. "We should get to sleep or we'll never be ready for tomorrow. Is Tiff done yet?"

> Caspin shrugged and crumpled up the small brown paper bag in which her candy came. Before she could see anything, gunshots rang out from inside the Exxon. Madison instinctively dropped to the ground.

> Screams were heard echoing through the night outside the station. Caspin, her back pressed up against the white wall, slowly edged around the corner.

> "Casp-" Madison reluctantly followed her, and the two stopped by the front corner of the station.

> There was silence, for once, and the two girls slowly glanced at each other in the fluorescent lights. There was a faint moan from inside, and more staccato gunshots. This time glass broke out and landed all over the girls. Caspin threw herself over Madison and the two remained breathless on the concrete while car tires screeched and a rusty old Chrysler drove off, bullets whistling into the wall above their heads.

> Madison remained there, barely breathing, blood ebbing from numerous tears in her flesh where flying glass and shrapnel had hit her.

> Moments later, Caspin finally got up off Madison and helped her up. Caspin had made it through with less hurt, it seemed. She must have pushed Madison's face down into the glass, blood was everywhere and shining little pieces were still embedded into Madison's face. She would probably need stitches.

> "Come on, Maddie," Caspin was calm. "We need to get someone to look at your face,"

> "Wait. Tiffany," Madison almost completely ignored Caspin. Stepping over the glass and shards into the ransacked Exxon station, she called out around her, softly, eerily. "Tiffany? You okay? Tiff?"

> Caspin slowly and reluctantly followed Madison into the station, stepping over mangled bodies and pools of blood. The eighteen-year-old who had sold them their candy was now slumped over the lottery display, lifeless. A young man in a leather jacket lay dead on the floor. The refrigerator windows were shattered and various types of pop, milk, water, juice, and beer flowed onto the ground.

> "Shit!" Madison's voice rang out, breaking the uneasy silence. Caspin ran up to where she stood, in between rows of potato chips, staring at the particularly beaten, broken, and bullet-ridden corpse of their friend Tiffany.

> "Oh my god!" Maddie, Caspin reached for her friend's arm.

> "My!" Madison still stared at Tiffany's body, the colour draining from her bloodied face.

> "Let's go, Maddie!"

> "Shit! Shit! Shit!" Madison was going into shock.

> Caspin grabbed Madison by the shoulders and dragged her out. "Wait! Shit..shit!" Madison seemed only capable of one coherent word.

> "The cops'll be here soon, Maddie, we'll talk to them and we'll take care of it. 'Kay?"

> "Shit! Shit! Did you see that?!"

> And inside the plundered Exxon station, the bleeding and lifeless form of Tiffany had one, single, disturbing word carved into her forehead with a crude knife.

> WITCH.

>
 Chapter One

>
 Golden Gate Theatre

> San Francisco, California
 July 10, 6:30 PM

>
 FBI Special Agent Dana Scully stood silently outside the brightly lit, tall theatre. The sun was dipping low behind the slanted buildings on the hills behind her. A group of well-dressed twenty something's with coloured hair thick with gel and classy jewellery stood near one of the entrances.

>
 Scully pulled her black trenchcoat tighter around her body to protect from the biting wind. Where the hell was Mulder? The redheaded agent still had but a vague idea what she and he were doing seeing a play in San Francisco. His briefing in his basement office hadn't been too clear.

>
 "The deaths of these girls is in a pattern, Scully. I think I have an idea where they might end up next." Mulder, defying tradition, didn't elaborate any further on his conspiratorial ideas. Scully only knew that recently there had been murders of girls in cities on the Eastern seaboard and all over Canada. Logically, Scully had argued, Canadian murders weren't in their jurisdiction. But Mulder had argued back that they were if the same murderer was breaking American laws in the country. Besides, the murders followed a great Canadian export.

>
 A new fad was sweeping North America, at least in the slightly bigger cities. They were a small band of Canadian teenagers, travelling select cities performing plays, improvisation and stand-up.

>
 The murders had started in late-May. All of the twelve girls, who were in their mid teens to mid twenties, lived in large metropolitan cities with a huge underground counter-culture. They were all part of that counter-culture.

>
 But there was one startling link between the murders that Mulder had still not revealed to his partner- all the girls were practising witches. Or, to be more politically correct, they were believers in the Wiccan faith, and practised witchcraft as part of their religion. Other than that, the killer or killers seemed to have no prejudice about race or even nationality- two of the girls, victims in Texas, had been Mexican. Most were American or Canadian, or Americans in Canada or Canadians in America. As was Tiffany, the Seattle victim. Tiffany, in fact, was part of the theatre troupe, a stagehand and distance learning tutor.

>
 And now she was dead. Along with eleven other innocent girls across the continent. And Mulder was grasping at straws. As usual.

>
 Another gust of wind blew angrily at Scully's face, temporarily burning her skin. "Where the hell are you, Mulder?"

>
 "Right here," a deep, hard voice came from behind her. Scully turned to see Mulder, forest brown hair slicked back, wearing a black suit with a mandarin white shirt.

>
 "Don't you think you overdid it a little?" Scully asked. "This isn't exactly the opera," She jerked her head at the young counter-culture members milling around the entrance, who were now in the process of sharing a joint.

>
 Mulder shrugged. "I've never been to the theatre before. I didn't know what to expect." He grinned and leaned back a bit. "It seems you dolled yourself up a bit too, Scully,"

>
 The redhead sighed. "There's nothing wrong with getting a

little dressed up for the theatre." A fleeting thought passed through her mind as he regarded her short black lacy dress and string of pearls. Had she really dressed up for the sake of the art, or to impress Mulder with her culture?

>
 Where had _that_ come from? If she was comfortable with anyone, it was Mulder. And he, among anyone, would know that Scully didn't know the front of house from the front porch.

>
 She sighed and brushed the thought away. "What are we doing here, Mulder?"

>
 "I have a hunch. And as much as I know you hate to admit it, my hunches are often right," He took her arm gallantly and led her through the poster-lined doors into the front of house, producing two tickets. "I think this particular group of people is directly connected to the murders. We have a meeting with the director tonight. Two of the girls in the troupe witnessed their friend's murder. I think if we shadow the group long enough, we can catch them."

>
 The two stopped in the middle of the great foyer. "You know, Scully," Mulder said thoughtfully. "We've never done something like this before."

>
 "What do you mean?" Scully let the trenchcoat slide off her nearly bare shoulders and folded it over her elbow.

>
 "Go out as friends. Like to a movie or a play." He suddenly grinned. "Here," Mulder reached into his shirt and pulled out a single red rose, in a clear plastic tube.

>
 Scully was speechless as she accepted the rose. "What's this for?"

>
 Mulder shrugged. "I always equated theatre with flowers. And hey, may as well look like a real couple, right?"

>
 The redheaded agent fully smiled, cradling the rose in her hands. "Why thank you, Mulder."

>
 He shrugged.

>
 Finally, lights flashed and the ushers let them in. The Bureau had set them up with front row, centre tickets in the two-balcony theatre. No waste of taxpayer's money there.

>
 The play was called 'Indestructible'. Scully could tell that Mulder really enjoyed it. It was more than she expected, too. Never much being one for 'the arts', she could feel herself growing a more friendly taste for theatre.

>
 Mulder was eating it up. The play was a new and unconventional look on cloning. It had everything that sparked Mulder's attention-futuristic slang, clones and cyborgs and androids, a government conspiracy and even space aliens and entire scenes taking place on the moon.

>
 Despite being 'counter-culture', a term which Scully would never understand if it hit her in the face, the play included complex plot twists and all the guidebook characteristics of classic theatre-juxtaposition, symbolism, canon characters. It could have been an opera, if not for the drugs and sex and swearing and swearing and swearing.

>
 Intermission was awkward. While young theatregoers wandered out in throngs to have cigarettes and joints, the others who milled inside kept glancing warily at the two agents. It seemed the Space Age Porn Stars (which was the name of the theatre troupe) did not warrant extensive formal wear. Most of them looked like they had shown up in what they wore to work.

>
 After the play, for which Mulder gave a standing ovation, an opportunity people never get in movies, he led Scully to the side of the house and they waited. Eventually the room cleared and the house lights were up. Gone was the magic that seemed to have transported

the two agents into the distant future, into a world of slavery and cloning and fugitives and drugs. Now all that was left was a red-carpeted bunch of seats, diamond-shaped lights, and obscure set pieces on a dirty stage.

>
 Mulder grinned at her. "Come on," He took her arm again and led her to the stage, climbing up on to it.

>
 "Uhâ€|Mulder?" Scully looked up at him, gesturing to her little dress, which fell to mid-thigh.

>
 "Oh relax. Nobody's watching." He held down an arm and she clambered up on stage.

>
 The two disappeared into the right wing, which to them was on their left. It was obvious Mulder didn't know where he was going. Stumbling through the darkness, they eventually came into contact with a flashlight.

>
 "Whoa, hey! What're you doing back here? Nobody's supposed to be here." A young man, dressed in black, with a headset said to them, behind the blinding flashlight.

>
 Mulder and Scully automatically pulled out their badges.

"Agents Mulder and Scully, FBI." If the boy's eyes widened, neither of them saw it through the light. "We're here to see Madison Riley?"

>
 "Ohâ€|shit." The boy shined the light on their badges. "Jesus Christ, Maddie, what'd you _do_?" He appeared to be saying into his headset. "Yeah, yeah, it's them. Okay," He looked up at the two agents. "Just hang out over there," He pointed vaguely behind him. "She's around."

>
 The two agents wandered into a more brightly-lit part of the backstage. From down a hall they heard faint laughter. Another young man, dressed in black, whom they did not recognise from the play, scurried past, laden with tiny microphone sets and cords.

>
 "Umâ€|hi?" A confident, deep feminine voice said from behind them. The two turned to see a young woman, who looked about nineteen, behind them. They did not recognise her from the play, either, but she was not decked out in black. She had black hair, which they didn't know because it was dyed bright pink on one side and bright green on the other, and held up in two tight knots with the occasional strand flung out. She had glasses and a punk chain around her neck, over a home-made tanktop with an iron-on design that said 'Starfighter'. She was somewhere between your typical teen (if you lived during the punk movement) and a character out of a Gibson novel. Platform shoes that didn't look like platform shoes- in fact, they sort of resembled astronaut boots crossed with swing dancing shoes, but they had the extra two inches of sole. Home-made black pants with glow-in-the-dark constellations outlined and named. She had a big plastic baggie tied to one belt loop, which hung low to reveal a naval-ring clad midriff, containing a green notebook.

>
 Her home-made pants were entirely too wide for her own good.

>
 They could have held encyclopaedia sets. As she took another step, it looked as if she was floating, for they couldn't see her knee bend.

>
 She smiled at them, a cynical but friendly smile.

>
 Out with the badges.

>
 "Agents Mulder and Scully, FBI." Scully provided this time.

>
 "Madison Riley," the young woman shook hands with both the agents.

>
 "You directed this play?" Mulder asked, still taken aback by the girl's youthfulness.

>
 "Yeahâ€|no, my brother did," Madison shook her head a bit, as if distracted by something. "You saw him in the play- the bartender? Looks an awful lot like me? It was a fairly small part, but he _ was_ directing it." She glanced around herself. "He's around, somewhereâ€|things are crazy right now. I mean, things are always crazy in a play, especially when you're touring, but they've been crazier sinceâ€|" She trailed off.

>
 "With all due respect, Ms. Riley," Mulder began. "But may I ask what you had to do with this production? It's just that you weren't in the play and you aren't in the crewâ€|uniform."

>
 "What? Oh," Madison seemed to have forgotten she was talking to them. "I wrote it."

>
 This surprised the two. "Really?" Scully let her professionalism slip.

>
 Madison nodded, modestly. "I write all the Space Age Porn Star stuff."

>
 "Umâ€|do you mind if I ask how old you are?" Mulder ventured.

>
 "I'm seventeen." The agents remained silent. "Well, sixteen. I'm seventeen in two weeks."

>
 "You're seventeenâ€|" Mulder began. "And you wrote Indestructible?"

>
 Another nod.

>
 "Is it the only thing you've written?"

>
 "Oh, no," For a moment, she looked offended. "I've been writing stage sketches for Space Age since I was eleven. Things took off when I was fourteen, though. Well, fifteen. I wrote the play when I was fourteen, but it was produced right after I turned fifteen. It's what got us the deal with Arcade Productions. They did our first movie."

>
 "Movie?"

>
 "Yeah. Our first one. My brother directed it. A bunch of these guys are in it, and a bunch of guys from back home who have helped us out- it's opening at Cannes, we're all real excited about it." It was as if she blushed, but her face, while tan, was somewhat colourless. In fact, her face was covered with tiny abrasions and the occasional stitch, which the agents hadn't noticed before.

>
 "And you wrote it?" Scully asked, disbelieving.

>
 "Yeah," Like it was no big thing. "Yeah, and my novel came out last month. I'm writing two plays right nowâ€|" Madison had a knack for changing subjects. She glanced down at the notebook in the bag at her waist. "One for Space Age, one for this company in London. I forget what it's called, but it's run by Ewan McGregor. It's pretty neat, that he's this big movie star guy but he still does fringe in London."

>
 "Fringe?" Mulder asked.

>
 "Listen," Scully stopped him. "We're here to interview you about what you saw."

>
 The life left Madison's face. "Ohâ€|yeah. Wait a minuteâ€|what?" It seemed Madison had trouble hanging on to one train of thought. "Oh, right, of course, but my friend Caspin isn't hereâ€|she was there too. And things are real crazy here right now, I probably wouldn't be much help. Listen, are you guys free tonight?"

>
 The agents were a bit taken aback. But they nodded yes as the young woman took the notebook out of her plastic baggie and ripped a piece of paper from it, producing a pen from the vast cargo pockets of her home-made, too wide for her own good pants. "Never go anywhere without my notebook and a pen," She explained as she scribbled something on the scrap of paper. "Here, come to the after-party"

tonight. Well, not to all of it, I doubt you wanna party with a bunch of teenagers, but Caspin will be there and I guess you wanna talk to everyone else, right? Like everyone who knew Tiff?"

>
 Scully nodded as she took the paper. "That's our motel. In Oakland. And mine and Mike's room. Mike is my brother," she added. "Just drop by whenever. 'Kay?"

>
 The agents nodded, and the girl meandered back down the hall, a somewhat confused look on her face. Halfway through it was like she had forgotten where she was going and was looking interestedly at a piece of equipment. Then she started down the hall again.

>
 "Interesting girl," Scully commented.

>
 "Aren't they always?"

>

> --

>
 Sleep Easy Motel

> Oakland, California
 July 10, 11:43 PM

>
 Mulder stopped their rented car outside the small motel, a five-minute drive from San Francisco. Two large trailers were parked outside, no doubt housing set pieces, costumes, and theatre equipment. Mulder opened Scully's door for her and they went to find the motel room together. Mulder had commented repeatedly on the trip there that this was also the first party they had been to together. It was a night of firsts.

>
 In fact, it appeared, this was the first party either Scully or Mulder had been to for a long time.

>
 But of course, it was not like they were invited. It was a teenage party, after all. And they weren't there to party. They were there for business.

>
 Right. Business.

>
 Unbeknownst to the two agents, almost ten minutes earlier, Madison had burst into one of the rooms and pointed an accusing finger at two of the occupants there.

>
 "No pot!" She had cried.

>
 Jessica and Richard, two of the actors in the troupe and possibly the two most outrageous, looked up at her in shock. "What? Why?" They cried in unison.

>
 "The feds are coming."

>
 Richard made a face. "Well, who invited the RCMP?"

>
 "Not redcoats, you idiot, the feds!" Madison took a step closer to her friends. "The FBI are coming. They're going to talk to us aboutâ€|you knowâ€|"

>
 "Oh," Said Jessica, calming down. "Well then that makes sense."

>
 "Oh come on guys!" Richard cut in, taking a baggie of green mulch out of his pants. "What better way to freak out squares than to get them high?" He looked at Madison, putting on his best pretty-boy pouty look. "You know you want to."

>
 "That's peer pressure and that's low," Socrates mentioned from where she was on the floor, watching music videos.

>
 "Can you keep it in your pants for five minutes, Rich?" Madison cried. "That's all their gonna be here for. And no booze, either, 'til after they're gone."

>
 Jessica sighed and slid her hard lemonade bottle back under the couch.

>
 "What're they gonna do, fine us?" Richard said haughtily, stuffing the baggie back in his pants and turned back to the TV.

>
 "I dunno. I'd rather not find out." Madison said softly.

>
 Michael, twenty, not very much taller than his sister,

broad-shouldered, dark, with a striking resemblance to Madison entered the room.

>
 "You guys okay? I don't need to get anything else for you? I'm thinking of heading out."

>
 "No, wait," Madison stopped him. "The FBI areâ€|isâ€|coming. To interview us. I figure they'll want to talk to all of us."

>
 "Is this about what's been happening with Lisseth?" Michael asked cynically.

>
 "This has nothing to do with Lisseth!" Madison retorted.

>
 "What's wrong with Lisseth?" Socrates asked from the floor.

>
 "Nothing! I don't thinkâ€|"

>
 "Oh, I don't care," Socrates completely and unfairly ignored Madison.

>
 Madison seemed to forget what she was talking about for a minute. "Here," She took her brother's arm and led him from the room. "Please, Mike, don't say anything about Lisseth or Caspin or Jake to themâ€|"

>
 "Jake?" Michael looked down on his beloved sister. "Is Jake involved with this, too?"

>
 Madison looked defeated. She had a knack at mentioning things she didn't mean to.

>
 "Wellâ€|not really. Remember, he and Liss had that thing andâ€|and I don't think he ever got over it and it really scared him." Madison looked up at the man who had had a great deal in raising her.

>
 Michael leaned back against the wall. He remembered finding Jake at rehearsal one day, in Vancouver, in a small crawl space at the back of the theatre, amongst set pieces and costumes, with a bottle of rum and a razor. He had gotten there in time. The whole ordeal had shaken the entire troupe of. Almost as bad as Tiffanyâ€|

>
 Eventually the young actor/director let it slide and agreed not to mention anything about Lisseth or Caspin or Jake's dabblingsâ€|as well as to keep the troupe's affinity for weed and alcohol very hush hush.

>
 When the agents arrived five minutes later, the door was opened by the same young man who had stopped them backstage.

>
 "Jesus Christ, it's the feds!" He cried again. "Madison! What the hell did you do?"

>
 Madison pushed him out of the way, letting the agents in.

"Relax, Cameron. Agents Mulder and Scully, this is Cameron, our prop and set guy. It seems you've met him."

>
 Scully shot a glance at Mulder, who just grinned in return. Other introductions were made.

>
 There was her brother, Michael, the director. Some of the cast included Jake, a devilish looking young man with a feeble goatee, Caspin, tall and skinny and blonde, Socrates, a young woman with multi-coloured hair and an engaging grin, and Hannah, small and happy with long brown hair. There was also Richard, a boy with a prima-donna type look and Jessica, with flaming red hair, who shook their hands vigorously.

>
 Scully introduced herself and Mulder, who complimented each of the kids on a spectacular performance. Most of the kids shied away modestly, while Socrates basked in the glory.

>
 Suddenly, hands looped around Madison's waist and a voice was heard. "Aren't you going to introduce me, little one?"

>
 Madison's face positively lit up and she turned to wrap her arms around the young man behind her in a tight, loving hug. It

seemed to Scully, though, that the hug, the pet name, meant more to her than it did to the young man.

>
 A feeling Scully knew all too well.

>
 Another odd, un-called for thought! What was wrong with her tonight? It was the theatre, the rose, the magicâ€|the pot smokeâ€|it was getting to her head.

>
 Madison turned to the agents. "Agents Mulder, Scullyâ€|this is Kevin," She said, adoringly, a faraway look in her eyes.

>
 Kevin, skinny and tall with lots of curly brown hair and thick glasses, wearingâ€|suspenders? And swing dancing shoes? And, indeed, a feathered hat to top off the 'forties look.

>
 Mulder instantly shook his hand. Kevin had been one of the leads. He introduced himself and Scully and complimented Kevin on his efforts.

>
 "Thanks," He said, before turning back to Madison. "It's odd seeing suits at our productionsâ€|we're mostly fringe."

>
 "Fringe?" Mulder asked.

>
 "Listen, we're here to talk to you guys about your friend?" Scully stopped him.

>
 Immediately Kevin's face darkened. "Ohâ€|right. Well, you'd better meet our crew then."

>
 There was Cameron, of course, in charge of set and props, who was busy amusing himself, Socrates and Jessica with cornstarch mixed in water. The three giggled inanely.

>
 There was Brett, a monotone yet friendly young man, their sound technician.

>
 And Lisseth, the lighting technician.

>
 The small Asian girl looked up at the agents from heavily made up eyes. She had a myriad of silver jewellery around her neck, mostly tiny sculptured dolphins and pentagrams. Jake also had a pentagram around his neck, as did Caspin. She introduced herself timidly, and answered their interview questions quietly, after which she collapsed onto Brett's chest, who put his arm around her.

>
 The agents conducted the rest of their interview as the party started around them. Sketch comedy played on the television.

Musicâ€|something that sounded like Indian techno rockâ€|

>
 "Asian Dub Foundation," Madison had offered by way of explanation. "They're really good."

>
 The kids offered up the information they could- what Tiffany did, what she was like, why they think she was murdered. They all seemed carefully guarded, though, and anxious for the agents to leave. There seemed to be a collective sigh when the agents announced their departure.

>
 "We learned nothing," Scully complained on the ride back to their hotel in San Francisco.

>
 "I beg to differ," Mulder said, steering the rental car over the highway. "Did you see the way all their faces changed when we asked about their friend?"

>
 "They're teenagers, Mulder, and their friend was murdered. Of course they were like that."

>
 "Oh come on, Scully. We live in a world where six-year-olds are capable of killing each other. They're hiding something. And I think we should find out what."

>
 Scully let it drop and went back to admiring the rose he had given her. Eventually they were back in their hotel and Scully was getting ready for bed, still trying to figure out what the fleeting thoughts she had had earlier were all about.

>
 Mulder, meanwhile, sat in his room staring at the play's program.

>
 "Her brother directed it," He muttered. He thought of the two,

spitting images of each other, at the party. Michael refused to let Madison be interviewed without him there. He worried about her, he said. It was clear that the two were very close. Madison looked up to Michael as if he were her father. Perhaps that was the role he had played in her life.

>
 Perhaps that was the role he was supposed to play in Samantha's.

>
 Mulder sighed and turned out the light, casting the program aside and sinking into bed. He missed her so much. Every single empty day.

>
 He had sat in that motel room watching a group of excited teenagers live life the way they should. Without worries, because Madison had her big brother to look after them.

>
 Mulder should have taken better care of Samantha. He should have saved her. Some big brother he turned out to be.

>
 Flipping over, he hugged his pillow closer to him and sighed. He had spent most of his life searching for her. It was futile. He had wasted a childhood and a teenaged-hood, time he should have spent with his friends, trying to hide pot and booze, obsessed with music and clothesâ€|and he had lost it.

>
 He closed his eyes, making one last wish, one he had wished several times, not like he'd admit it. He wished for his childhood back. A childhood of scraped knees and sunflower seeds.

>
 And drifted into sleep.

>
 The next morning, Scully sat picking at a nail over a continental breakfast, waiting for Mulder. They had agreed to meet at eight in the breakfast hall, but of course he had been a no-show.

>
 Sighing, the redheaded agent put down her napkin and headed up the elevators to Mulder's room.

>
 Hesitantly, she knocked on the door. "Mulder?"

>
 Silence. She knocked again. Impatiently this time. "Mulder."

>
 There was a groan coming from inside. "Five more minutes!" Came a voice. Mulder'sâ€|. It didn't sound quiet right. Maybe it was just early-morning grogginess.

>
 She knocked again. "Mulder, we have to go. Come on."

>
 There was a heavy sigh inside. "Fine, just a second."

>
 Eventually the door was opened and Scully was speechless.

>
 "Whoa, Scully, did you get new shoes or somethin'?" This was not Mulder's voiceâ€|and it was not coming from Mulder's body. Before her stood a boy no more than sixteen, scrawny, skinny, with huge brown eyes and shaggy brown hair.

>

> Chapter Two

> Sleep Easy Motel
 Oakland, California

> 8:37 am, July 11

> Madison was helping her brother pack up the last of the group's things for their trip to LA. A stereo sat on the concrete, plugged into the motel, pumping out fast-pace trance-like British Middle Eastern pop rock.

> "I am the rebel warrior, I have reasoned along with my head held high. I am lonely west, in the course of the oppressedâ€|" Madison danced on the concrete in the early-morning California sun as she pushed the huge back doors of the trailer shut.

> Jake appeared by the stereo, and stood there regarding her.

> When Madison finally saw her friend she stopped and looked back at him. "What?" She asked.

> Jake didn't say anything, but his expression said it all. He bit his lip and his eyes flickered at the ground for an instance.

> "Oh, Christ Jesus, you guys didn't do something again, did you?"

> He only shrugged.

>

> Meanwhile, in the breakfast hall in their hotel in San Francisco, Fox Mulder, or a young man who perceived himself to be Fox Mulder, was helping himself to a third serving of pancakes.

> Scully sat across, eyeing the young man warily. "Do you think you really need all that?"

> The boy looked up at her, flipping shaggy brown hair out of his eyes with an impatient flick of his head. "I'm hungry. I don't know what to tell you."

> The redheaded agent sighed. The last half-hour had been one for the ages. Scully had just stared at the boy for a minute after he opened the door until he responded rudely.

> "What?!" Irritated.

> "â€|Where's Mulder?" Had been Scully's bewildered response.

> "Jesus, Scully, it's eight in the fricken' morning. What are you talking about?" The young man who perceived himself to be Fox Mulder rubbed his face with his left hand. Which was adorned with the same classy watch the real Fox Mulder had been wearing the night before.

> "Mulderâ€| "

> "Whaa-aat?" The boy looked like he was about to throw a tantrum.

> "Have you taken a look in the mirror yet today?"

> "No!" He rubbed at his eyes again. "I just got up to open the door for you. Can I go back to bed? I don't feel so hot,"

> Scully still did not believe that there was any chance the moody boy in front of her was Mulder. If not for the physical evidence, which was usually enough for the redheaded agent, it was his mannerisms and the way he spoke. It reeked of anyone but Mulder. You could say it reeked of non-Mulder.

> It reeked ofâ€|Fox.

> Scully grabbed the boy's wrist and dragged him into the room, slamming the door behind her.

> "Ow! Scully, fuck off!"

> "Who are you, what are you doing here, and what the hell happened to Mulder?" She demanded.

> "For the love of hot-cake, Scully, I 'm right here. Why are you bitching out on me?"

> Scully stared at the boy with her infamous raised eyebrow. "There's no way-"

> "You could change your name to Agent Bitchowski," The boy grinned, obviously intending it in jest. Scully continued to glare at him.

"Oh, come on, Scully!" He implored. "It was a joke! You know I don't mean it. You know I think you're the greatest." He was cut off when Scully pushed him in front of the wide hotel mirror.

> "â€|dude," He said softly after a moment of regarding the baby-faced teenager staring back at him. "Holy man, Scully, are you checking this shit out?" He cried, pointing at himself.

>
 Another silent, intense, raised eyebrow. "Why are you talking like that?"

>
 "Talking like what?" The young man who perceived himself to be Mulder was again staring at himself in the mirror.

>
 "Well, you're not talking like Mulder," Scully had gone into her accept-all and analyse mode, accepting that no matter where Mulder was, the boy wasn't going to be much help and now he was apparently in her care. She sighed.

>
 "I don't know what to tell you," He was now flipping through the hotel's room service menu.

>
 "Could you please put clothes on?" Scully wasn't sure of the rules involving teenagers in their underwear. Ill-fitting underwear that was slowly sliding off his hips.

>
 "I don't think any of my clothes fit anymore," The boy opened the suitcase laid out on the floor. "I don't know if you've noticed, but I seemed to have gotten slightly shorter. And a lot thinner."

>
 Scully eyed the boy who was now pulling a pair of pants and a shirt out of the suitcase, so skinny his ribs were showing. She and her partner didn't often share details of their childhood, but she had always pictured Mulder to be the scrawny, skinny, geeky type. In fact, if you were to ask Scully to describe her image of the teenaged Mulder, you'd get a perfect composite of the boy who was clumsily pulling clothes onto himself in front of her right now.

>
 Not that he actually was Mulder. Scully was too cynical to believe that. Especially not right now.

>
 "Scully, I'm really, really hungry. And tired. So either we can go downstairs and you can buy me breakfast," He flashed a hopeful grin. "Or you can let me go back to bed. Your choice."

>
 And that's where they had been, Scully watching the boy eat endless servings of fruit and pancakes and English muffins, still trying to figure out a possible answer to the questions in her head. Needless to say, she never found any.

>

> The streets.
 San Francisco, California

> 9:03 am, July 11

> "Joy to the world, all the boys and girls!" Jessica and Richard sang along to the classic rock station and swayed back and forth in the back seat of the grungy rental car, now reeking of pot smoke, while Madison drove to the next hotel on their list. "Joy to the fishes in the deep blue sea, joy to you and me."

> "If I were the king of the world, tell you what I'd do. Do away with cars and the bars and the war, and make sweet love to you." Richard took over and punctuated the last line with an expectant look at Jessica, who smiled back. They went back to swaying in unison.

> "You guys are such a help," Madison sighed as she stopped at a stoplight, finding the address again in her "Discover San Francisco" tourist book. She hoped no one could see her reading it.

> "Hey, who suggested this whole 'find-the-agents' thing?" Richard said indignantly.

> "Socrates," Madison shot back. "You just suggested the Ritz. 'Cause they'd be staying at the Ritz. The FB freakin' I always holes up their agents at the _Ritz_."

>
 "Well excuse us for wanting to see the _Ritz_," Jessica replied sarcastically. "You know I hadn't ever left Canada until this tour. And I never got a chance to see America on the tour anyway."

>
 "Not like you'd actually spend money to see America," Richard added petulantly. Jessica snorted her approval.

>
 "Shit on a stick, guys, you could've stayed and helped pack up instead of bothering me here. This is serious. Somebody's life was just changed drastically and I don't want anybody slashing their wrists over this."

>
 "Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, those damn Mormons!"

Jessica cried, leaning forward again. "Relax. Have a joint."
>
 "I'm not going to have a joint when I'm driving, hoser,"
Madison guided the rental car along steep roads and curves.
>
 "Well then get a Pepsi," Richard cut in. Pepsi was a bigger
vice for Madison than pot anyway.
>
 "Maybe I willâ€¦" Madison muttered. She pulled into the front
of the hotel and opened her door. "You guys stay here. Or take off. I
don't care." She ran up the steps to the lobby, bought a Pepsi from
the gift shop, and asked the receptionist where a Fox Mulder was
staying.
>
 The young writer drained most of the Pepsi on the elevator up,
swaying to the light airy music and grinning at upright,
professional-looking business-type people, trying to freak them out.
"Punks," She muttered under breath as she stepped off the elevator,
just to bother them. A real punk walked by, with his family, and she
cried out. "Outstanding citizen! Great work!"
>
 Madison got to Mulder's door and knocked, drinking more Pepsi.
She knocked again. "Hello?" She voiced. Dammit. She sincerely hoped
she didn't miss the agents; that would be-
>
 "Can I help you?"
>
 Madison jumped at the sound of Scully's voice. She turned and
saw the redheaded agent in question, with a scrawny, wide-eyed boy
trailing behind her.
>
 "Mother fucker!" The girl cried. She quickly covered her mouth.
"I'm sorry. I just thought I was too late-"
>
 "Late for what?" Scully asked. The girl just pointed at the
boy. "That is Agent Mulder, right?"
>
 "Yep," The boy said, grinning.
>
 "I don't know. We're still trying to sort things out," Scully
contradicted.
>
 "Oh, it's him." Madison said. "And I am really, really sorry
about this."
>
 Scully raised her cynical eyebrow. "You know what caused this?"

>
 Madison was drinking more Pepsi at this point. "Yes. No. I'm
not sure. Jake wasn't too clear on it. But now that I've seen
thisâ€¦" She gestured at the young man again. "It's the only
explanation you've got right now, right? And once again, I am very
sorryâ€¦"
>
 "Well the only question right now is what you're going to do to
get Mulder back," Scully said.
>
 The girl shrugged. "Well there's nothing I can do. Besides,
we're flying out today. And I don't care what you FBI types think,
but the show must go on. You're just gonna have to come with us. But
you were planning on following us anyway, right?" The girl grinned at
the emotionless expression on Scully's face. Being in theatre, one
learns to see right past that. Scully was secretly taken aback at the
girl's ability to know a perfect stranger so well. Madison would tell
you that as a writer, it was her job to know people.
>
 "We're going to Washington anyway. That's where you guys are,
like, headquartered or whatever, though, right?" The agents nodded.
"We're flying out in about an hour. You guys are free to come with
us,"
>
 "How're you getting all your shit there?" Scully was still not
used to the young Mulder's new-found affinity for cursing.
>
 Madison grinned again. "FedEx promises overnight delivery.
We're gonna give them a plane-load of very fragile set pieces and
then blackmail them if they don't do it right." She glanced behind
her. "Um, Agent Scully, Agent Mulder, I got a car rented from the
airport downstairs. You guys can get your shit, and I assume you have

a rental car to drop off too. I can just follow you there and then drive you back to our motel. If you don't mind riding with my friends." She scowled for a moment.
>
 The young Mulder grinned. "That'd be fine. And call me Fox."

>

> Chapter Three

> The ride to drop off the rental car was just as awkward as breakfast had been. Scully noticed that the young man who perceived himself to be Fox Mulder had lapsed into a fidgeting silence, an unreadable, dark expression on his face.

> "What's wrong?" She managed to venture, finally.

> He didn't answer right away. He pulled at the cuffs of his overlarge sleeves, huge brown eyes cast to the floor. "Nothing," He eventually answered, softly.

> Scully let it drop, and focused her concentration on the road ahead of her. The boy continued to pull at his sleeves.

> "Scully, do you think it would be possible for me to get some new clothes before we go see Skinner?" The young Mulder raised his face.

> She glanced at him, her eyebrow once again raised. "How'd you know about Skinner?"

> He almost looked hurt. "You still don't think it's me, do you, Scully?"

> "To be honest, no, I don't. I think there has to be a completely logical explanation for what happened to Mulder. I won't accept that he just happened to age backwards."

> The boy sighed. "I'm sorry to break it to you, Scully, but that seems to be what happened! I know you don't believe me, but it's me, it really is!"

> Scully didn't respond. The young Mulder let her sit in silence for a moment.

> "I remember things, Scully," He paused. "I can still remember things like when we were stuck in that forest and you sang to me. And when we grew old together. And when we found Samantha but then it just turned out to be a clone. And I remember when you went missing. I was so scared."

> The boy was once again slouching low in his seat, staring at the dashboard of the car. Scully listened as she drove on.

> "I can remember your mother coming up to me, and she gave me your cross. I can't remember if I cried. I'm pretty sure I did. It was the worst time of my life, when you weren't there. It was terrifying. You know what else I remember?" His voice picked up a bit. "When we kissed on New Year's. Even though I know it was just a New Year's kiss, it meant a lot to me."

> They had pulled into the small parking lot where they were to return the car. Madison and her friends pulled in next to them, music thumping.

> Scully and the young Mulder remained seated for a second, until the silence was thick and uncomfortable.

> "So do you think I could get some new clothes?" The boy ventured again.

> Scully opened her car door and was putting one foot out. "We'll see," She said vaguely.

>

> After the rental place, the two had crammed their luggage into the kids' tiny, grungy rental car. Scully had slid into the front, and Fox had moved into the back with Jessica and Richard.

> "Well, hello," Jessica said appreciatively to the boy, after Madison explained that it was the same Fox Mulder as last night.

"Come on in," She winked suggestively.

> "Uhâ€¦okay," Fox said softly, his cheeks visibly reddening. Jessica grinned as she slid in next to her and Madison pulled out of the parking lot.

> "You know, it's pretty cramped back here." The flamboyant young girl with the flaming red hair said. "You can sit on my lap, if you want,"

> "No, that's okay," Fox replied, growing even redder, if that's possible.

> In the front, both Madison and Agent Scully were hiding growing smiles as Jessica insisted that the boy come closer to her.

> "No, it isn't," She said sweetly. "Come on," The next thing he know, strong arms gripped his waist and he was pulled onto the girl's lap, facing Richard. He tried to get away, and was rewarded with a stinging slap on the rear. "That's better," Jessica said, pulling the boy closer to her. She had raised her voice, as Madison had the music pumping so loud it was hard to hear anyone. "You're a cutie, you know that?"

> Fox forced a smile and tried to cover his now cherry red face. "Thanksâ€¦I guess," Richard only helped by flashing him a malicious grin.

> "Sorry 'bout that," Madison cried over the music. "Jessica can be freakishly strong when she wants to,"

> Scully shot a look between the two front seats at Fox's blushing baby face, framed with soft shaggy brown hair. He is a cutieâ€¦ She thought, fleetingly. She suddenly turned her attention forward, trying not to think about the general weirdness that had taken over thoughts towards Mulder recently.
>
 For the agents, they couldn't have gotten to the airport fast enough. Scully, to have something to take her mind off he maddeningly attractive young man in the back seat, who may or may not be underage, and for Fox, so he could get off the strange girl's lap and out of her embarrassingly intimate hold. He had made the mistake of imaging the Agent Scully in her place and was trying to hide the evidence by hugging his knees, as much as he could in Jessica's lap. Thankfully, no one seemed to notice.
>
 The last thing he felt as he got out of the car at the airport was Jessica's grabby hands pinching his rear end.
>
 Flights never worked out the way people would like. The agents hadn't managed to get a flight to Washington until later that evening, and thus had to spend the day in San Francisco alone together. Madison, after asking Michael for the information, had given them the motel where they would be staying, and the papers for their own rental car for the agents to use before their flight. Unless they wanted to spend all day at the airport, she reasoned.

>
 The day had been long and hot. First, after checking in their bags for the flight home, then filing into the kids' rental car. Scully noticed the faint tinge of marijuana, but if the young Mulder noticed anything, he didn't comment.
>
 Their time in the car had been much like that morning. For the most, they sat in silence, with Fox constantly twiddling the radio dial and Scully constantly turning whatever he had on down.
>
 Finally, defeated, the boy leaned back in the seat and crossed his arms, sighing.
>
 "What's your problem now?" Scully asked impatiently.
>
 "I'm starving!" The boy complained. "And my clothes don't fit and it's bothering me. And you don't care."
>
 "Now that's not true." Scully turned to the boy. "If you're hungry, we can go and get lunch. As for clothes, you still have your

cards, right?" The boy nodded, shaggy brown hair falling in before his eyes. "Then you can buy them for yourself. I'll take you after lunch. We'll get dinner on the plane."

>
 She stepped out of the car, in the parking lot of a fast food joint. The boy remained seated a moment, arms crossed, before undoing his seatbelt and clumsily climbing out of the car.

>
 Fox had ordered quite a bit of greasy, unhealthy non-food. Scully lost her appetite just watching him eat. He ate neatly, not rudely or messily, very much like the older Mulder, it was just the sheer amount. Burger upon burger, giant sized french fries. Scully could swear she could feel the fat settling in her thighs just by watching.

>
 "Are you gonna eat that?" He asked, wiping his mouth, gesturing at her own untouched meal. She shook her head and leaned back, as he dug into her food.

>
 "What are we going to tell Skinner?" She eventually voiced.

>
 "About me or about the case?" Fox asked around a mouthful of quasi-beef by-product.

>
 "Both," She regarded the boy in front of her, wiping ketchup from his mouth. "He's not going to believe it, you know. He's not going to buy for one second that you are Fox Mulder and it's my ass that's gonna be on the line."

>
 Fox looked up at her. "Did you just say ass? This is a side of you I don't believe I've ever seen before."

>
 "This is serious, Fox. We have to figure out what we're gonna tell him."

>
 "Don't tell him anything." The boy took a sip from his extremely large cup of pop, still smiling at her implied admission of him being the real Fox Mulder. "There's nothing we can do until all this stops or wears off or I outgrow it or whatever. We could just go in and tell him what we feel about the case and act like nothing's wrong. He'll freak out." He grinned. "It'll be cool."

>
 Scully sat back listening to his suggestion. She just looked at him. She seemed to be doing that a lot since his accident earlier that morning. You know, with the right clothes, and maybe some more meat on his bones, Fox could have been in a rock band a rebel...regular teen heartthrob.

>
 The redheaded agent pushed the thought out of her mind with a shake of her head. Where had _ that _ come from? These out of character mental moments were getting beyond weird. The rose, the longing at least it would have been socially _ acceptable _ when Fox was an adult, as weird as that sounded. If there was anything Scully didn't know, it was definitely the rules involving thirty-somethings in the body of a teenager.

>
 "Well," she attempted to regain her composure. "What _ do _ we feel about the case?"

>
 "Easy," The boy responded, grabbing another fistful of fries. "One of the kids in the troupe did it."

>
 "You think so?"

>
 He nodded. "There's something about the way they talked about it. I don't think they're all in on it, but there's somebody involved. One of the quiet ones. Not any of the three who were with us today." He stopped, still holding his extremely large pop cup, staring at a point somewhere above Scully's head. "Or maybe it _ was _ one of the three with us today! Maybe they're all in or." He put down his cup and held his head in his hands. "Alright, now I'm confused,"

>
 "Don't worry about it." Scully cut in. "We'll figure it out when we've been with them more. Something is bound to happen,"

>
 "Alright," The boy straightened up. "Can I have a sundae?"

>
 Scully raised her infamous eyebrow. "You don't have to ask, Fox, it's your money,"

>
 "I just thought that under the circumstancesâ€|alright, whatever. Cool." He got up from the table and went to order.

>
 Scully sat back and thought about what Fox had said. It seemed to her that theatre people were the most open-minded people she knew. Even from just watching the play, and being at their party. From some of the comments the kids had made, she could tell that they didn't care about what race, ethnicity, nationality, or whatever else a person could be. It was obvious that Madison had a unique, understanding view of religion- that every religion is, essentially, the same, as they are all different names for the same creator, and most major religions teach very similar beliefs.

>
 Was Wiccan not included in her list of legitimate religions?

>
 That seemed unlikely. As it seemed unlikely that any of the other kids would feel so deeply about something. Maybe some of them didn't agree with Madison's viewsâ€|from what she had heard from conversations during the party.

>
 But were any of them capable of murder?

>
 They were artists, of some form, anyway, all of them. Although Scully wasn't a big fan of the arts, she had known a view in her lifetime, and while many were old before their time, and somewhat cynical about mainstream culture, they still held a lust for life as it was, and a respect for it. It was their job to comment on life and reflect it, they would say. It was up to everybody else to shape it.

>
 Even with all that, something inside, call it gut instinct, made Scully want to believe Mulder. Even though, technically, it didn't even make sense- the murders didn't start until the group started touring. There were no reported murders like this in Canada at the time, where the group had been living.

>
 Then again, even Canada's biggest cities were not as big as the States'. There was a chance that the kids grew up in places where many things were accepted, but many others were taboo. Like witchcraft, perhaps. And there simply weren't any where they lived.

>
 Well, that's why they were to see the kids again. They couldn't just sit and wait for another murder- this was one they were going to solve, despite Fox's little problem.

>

> Meanwhile, on the plane to Washington, Hannah and Madison were sitting together, a discman on Hannah's pull-out table. Listening to RENT.

> It was one of their traditions. As an actor and as a playwright, they both loved the musical dearly, and it's deceased creator, Jonathan Larson, whom they both held as a role model.

> Hannah sighed. "I swear to God, when I first found out Angel died I was bawling so hardâ€|"

> "I know," Madison conceded, staring at the roof of the plane.

> "I listened to the funeral reprise, like, seven times that night. It was months before I even got the courage to listen to act two when I found out how sad it was."

> "Mmm," Madison suddenly stood, ripping the little stereo phone out of her ear. "Would you excuse me? I was just overtaken with a sense of guilt,"

> She worked her way out of their little row of seats. Hannah took

the earphone with little surprise. Madison was weird like that.

> Madison walked down the airplane aisle until she came to Lisseth's seat, with Brett and Jake. "Lisseth, could you join me in the bathroom, please?" She caught Jake's suggestive leer. " Not for sex, I might add." Jake promptly pouted and went back to looking at his magazine.

>
 "Sure," Lisseth unbuckled herself and followed Madison to the back of the plane. "What's up?" She asked when the two were cramped in together and the door locked.

>
 "What the hell did you guys do to Agent Mulder?" She hissed through clenched teeth.

>
 Lisseth's eyes really widened. "What? Nothingâ€¦I don't know what you're talking about."

>
 "Never become an actor, Lisseth, you turned him into a bloody kid!"

>
 The little Asian girl grinned. "Really? It worked?" She caught Madison's glare and sighed. "Alright. Sorry,"

>
 "Well? What the hell happened?"

>
 Lisseth hesitated. "After the partyâ€¦that nightâ€¦I went into a trance," At Madison's look, she added, hurriedly, "It came unbidden! I don't call visions anymore, Maddie, not after I saw that Tiff wouldâ€¦" She sighed again. "Anyways, I saw Mulder. He was sad, he was almost crying. He lost a brother or sister when he was a kid, Maddie, and he only just found out what happened. He wished he could get his childhood back. So.."

>
 Madison leaned back, as much as she could, and regarded her friend. "I thought you never cast spells for other people's benefit," She muttered

>
 "Well, I guess you and all your save-the-starving-children campaigns rubbed off on me," She smirked at Madison's faint smiles. "Not to mention all the rebuild-the-burnt-down-women's-shelter, put-away-all-the-child-molesters and youth-outreach-for-young-prostitutes-in-Yugoslavia fundraisers."

>
 Madison sighed. "Alright, you've had your fun, can you change him back now?"

>
 Lisseth somehow managed to shrink into herself. "Iâ€¦don't think we can."

>
 "What?" Madison was really angry now. "God almighty, Liss, how many times do I have to tell you not to mess with something you don't understand?"

>
 "Don't spaz!" Lisseth cried. "I didn't make sure there was a reverse spell because I didn't think it would work."

>
 "Why the fuck not?"

>
 "Because we don't have a coven anymore! Jake was our fourth, but a coven is three women. I don't know what two chicks and a guy would do, I figured it wouldn't work. I'm sorry," She put a sort of puppy dog whine on the last words, that Madison sighed, defeated.

>
 "Well, figure out a way to reverse it," She sighed. "God, Liss, he's trying to help us, he's trying to protect you!" Lisseth stared at the floor. "Now he's probably gonna go back to his boss, who won't believe it's him, and put him in a fucking orphanage or juvie hall where he'll eat gruel for the rest of his life!"

>
 "Maddie, that's not gonna happen," Lisseth was the voice of logic this time.

>
 "You know I have an overactive imagination, Liss, you know what this kind of thing does to me!"

>
 "I know, I know. Alright. I promise I'll try to find a way to reverse this."

>
 "You'd better," Madison was not the type of person to give idle threats.
>

> An airplane.
 Somewhere over the Midwestern United States
> 10.30, 11.30, 12.30, 1.30 or 2.30 depending on what time you're on.

 July 11th. Or early July 12th.
>

> Scully shot another glance at the young man sitting next to her, sitting back sleepily in the chair, big brown eyes half-lidded with fatigue.

> They had gone to get clothes, and Scully did have to admit that Fox looked more comfortable, not to mention better, in the sneakers and stonewashed jeans, hooded sweatshirt under a blue striped shirt and clear plastic sunglasses with yellow lenses holding back his shaggy hair.

> "What's the matter?" She asked, softly, noticing the sort of sadness in his innocent eyes.

> "Nothingâ€|" He said softly, like before. "Justâ€|I just got over the shock and am sorta just now realizing what happened. Scullyâ€|what if this doesn't go away? What if I'm stuck like this?"

> "Then you get to be sixteen again, Fox. Something the rest of us can only dream of."

> He took a shaky breath, and for once in her life, Dana Scully thought he looked almost scared. "But what ifâ€|what if they wanna put me in a hospital or something? And, like, do tests on me or whatever?"

> The redheaded agent looked down at her new charge reassuringly. "I won't let that happen."

> The boy grinned up at her. "â€|Thanks, Scully." He turned over in his seat and closed his eyes as to rest.
 She stayed in that position, watching him in his sleep. If it was possible, he looked even younger. For a second, it seemed amazing to her that he would trust her so much. But then, if the situation was reversed, she would trust him just as much, right?
>
 A few moments later she took the sunglasses off his head and hooked them on the pocket on the seat in front of him. She signalled the flight attendant and asked for a pillow and blanket for her young charge. In about an hour, they'd land and go through the process of claiming their baggage, and settling in at home. And a few hours after that, they'd have to see Skinner and attempt to explain everything to him. She felt Fox needed his rest at least.
>
 _ He looks so sweet, _ She thought as she tucked the blanket around the boy. She had decided not to worry about the odd fleeting thoughts she was having and just let them come and go. Fox turned at her touch and slightly murmured in his sleep.
>
 After she was sure he wasn't having a nightmare, she didn't bother to resist the urge to plant a soft kiss on his forehead.
>
 Scully then turned and watched the end of the in-flight movie.

>

> Chapter Four
 This is Socky's chapter! Just because her real life persona stayed up with me on ICQ as I wrote it.
>
 Washington, DC
> 12:00 noon
 July 12th
>
 Socrates wasn't sure if she liked Washington. It could have been the fact that she was Canadian and in as such, was simply uncomfortable in America's capital. It could have been that she had trouble telling the difference between denominations of money, as it was all the same shade of puke green. It could have been that every

time she met someone knew, they asked the same infuriatingly stupid questions regarding her living conditions, and whether or not they were igloos, which was particularly annoying as she had never seen an igloo in her life.

>
 It might also of been because she was lost.

>
 It wasn't like she was lost in a bad part of town. Quite nice, in fact, if a bit reminiscent of the yuppie-dom she had grown up around. Tall buildings, lots of flags, nice cars and tons of people in business suits, laden with briefcases, engrossed in cellular conversation with one another.

>
 That was another thing. Socrates couldn't stand the way they were talking as they walked past, staring at her with glares that could burn their way through sheet metal- at her bright hair, her baggy boy's clothing, her punk chain, her cowboy hat. The cowboy hat that her yuppie father had bought for eighty Canadian dollars for the sole purpose of one day. The one that Madison hated. That she wore to spite her.

>
 These business people would walk buy, pressing cell phones to their phony faces, staring at her with fear. Fear! Of her! All the while still talking. Words like "ruff" "ve-hi-cle" "dub-ya". Socrates was slowly starting to lose he mind.

>
 Eventually she managed to gaze down at her own cell phone. The only other ones in the troupe that carried cells were Madison and her brother Michael. Of course, it had never occurred to anyone to exchange numbers. She left it on just in case, by some chance miracle, somebody had it written on a scrap of paper of a patch of flesh, and thought to look.

>
 In other cases, when separated from friends, Socrates just walked around until she found them. Michael's instructions had been very clear if any of them got lost, simply to stay where they were if they couldn't find their way back to the motel. Not like any of them had ever listened to Michael, as he was the only, however remote, authority figure around to disrespect. So the past two hours Socrates had wandered around Washington, ending up at yuppie central. She figured she had walked enough and had better start listening to Michael.

>
 She sighed, found a bench, and sat. Socrates made a mental note to suggest swapping cell numbers next time.

>

> Socrates wasn't the only one lost.

> Fox marvelled at his ability to get lost in his own workplace. The scrawny, wide-eyed boy stood in a hallway, glancing down one hallway, then another.

> For the sake of college football, who built this place?
He thought fleetingly. He sighed, hungry because he hadn't eaten since six and tired because he didn't get much sleep and frustrated because he was lost. Lost! How did he manage that, exactly?

>
 Fox started off down one hall, certain he hadn't been here yet. That's when light glancing off the top of a decidedly bald head burned into his retinas and he stopped.

>
 Skinner.

>
 As yet, he wasn't looking for Skinner. He and Scully had sat in his rebuilt office, which still, in his opinion, smelt like ashes, trying to write a decent report. He had complained of being hungry. She had told him to be quiet. She had to go for a meeting and told him she would be back in half an hour. She wasn't, so he went to go look for her. And gotten lost. That had been two hours ago.

>
 He should have stayed with her. He had no idea how she had managed to get him in past the guards but she had. She could probably get him out of an awkward and probably embarrassing narrative with

Skinner if she was here, too. From where he was standing, Skinner looked menacing- the big man had always looked menacing, but he was even bigger now given Fox's shortened stature.

>
 Slowly, carefully, he turned around and tried to tiptoe his way back to whence he came, but his jeans were too baggy, his limbs too long for his skinny body, and he tripped and crashed into a wall and slid to the floor, taking a picture of Kennedy with him.

>
 "Ow! Fuck it," He muttered, rubbing his offended shoulder. He looked up, way up, into the steely dark eyes of Assistant Director Walter Skinner.

>
 "Ahh!" He cried as the big man pulled him, gently, to his feet.

>
 "Are you here with your parents, son? Are you lost?" His boss asked.

>
 "Uhâ€|yeah," Fox grinned sheepishly, rubbing the back of his neck. "Um, I'm looking for an Agent Scully? I'm supposed to spend the day with her but I got lost and now I can't find her on account of I'm lostâ€|" Fox had also picked up a tendency to babble, as well as a shortened attention span.

>
 Skinner's eyes narrowed at this and he glanced down at the badge the boy was wearing on his simple black tee shirt. Scully had allowed him the ridiculously large pants, ones that would rival even Madison's home made atrocities, with pockets reaching down past his knees, but other than that he had a tight black tee with the edges of a white undershirt sticking out.

>
 The AD grabbed at the badge, causing Fox to jump, and said angrily "Why are you wearing this? Where did you get it?"

>
 "Umâ€|I'm wearing it because it's mine and I got it fromâ€|well, from the FBI, I guess."

>
 "Yeah. Right." He smartly boxed the boy's ear and dragged him into his own office.

>
 "What? What could I possibly gain by pretending to be Fox Mulder?" Fox said it like he was pointing out a painfully obvious fact.

>
 Skinner ignored him and pushed him into the couch. He turned to Kim. "Keep an eye on him. Make sure he doesn't go _anywhere_." He then stormed into his private office.

>
 Fox sighed and remained seated a moment, staring at the remarkably boring wall in front of him. He could feel the secretary's questioning eyes on him and eventually turned to her, giving her a dazzling smile. Well, it would have been dazzling if he didn't have the baby-faced features of a teenager.

>
 "Hi," He said matter-of-factly.

>
 "â€|Hi," She answered back hesitantly.

>
 "You wouldn't happen to have anything to eat, would you?" Hopefully.

>
 "Noâ€|sorry," Kim then ducked her head and continued to work, or to feign work. Fox sighed again and slumped down on the couch.

>
 A few minutes later, Scully walked in, her infamous eyebrow raised, the smatterings of their report in her hand.

>
 "Scully! Thank the gods!"

>
 "What are you doing here? I thought I told you to stay in your office!"

>
 "I did, for a while, but I was really hungry and you hadn't come back and I thought maybe you abandoned meâ€|" He even thought he sounded pathetic.

>
 "You shouldn't run off like that. I was worried about you," Scully had dropped the angry mom look. Fox looked up at her under his shock of shaggy brown hair, thinking how pretty she looked like that.

He immediately pushed the thought out of his head at the familiar, telltale stirring in his pants.

>
 "Sorry," He said, sitting up.

>
 Skinner choose that moment to re-enter the room. "Ah, Scully. You've found him."

>
 "Yes, sir. I'm sorry for all this." The redheaded agent sighed.

>
 "So he is yours," Skinner's face didn't show any change in emotion. Fox shifted uncomfortably. He hadn't been treated like such a kid since—well, since he was a kid. Then again, given the circumstances—

>
 "Maybe you can explain to me, then, Agent Scully, why you would bring a teenager into a secure government building and hope to pass him off as your partner?"

>
 Fox cringed. He hated it when Scully got the blame for his mistakes. He stood, casting away stray locks with an impatient flick of his head. "Please, sir, don't get mad at Scully. I'm the one who—well, I'm the one in this mess and we didn't know what to do."

>
 Skinner regarded the boy for an instant. "Who are you, anyway?"

>
 "I told you already!" Fox's new shortened attention span in addition to his crankiness and hunger was starting to erupt in a mood swing, despite Skinner's emanating authority.

>
 "This—this is Agent Mulder, sir," Scully provided.

>
 Skinner started at her, expressionless. Eventually he hazarded another look at the dishevelled teenaged boy beside them. Fox managed a weak, apologetic smile and waved.

>

> Socrates wasn't sure if dipping into the local 711 for a slurpee constituted as moving when she was waiting to be found. She figured it didn't. Besides, she was about to pass out from a mix of heat and hunger, despite the benefits of a large, disgusting cowboy hat. She had also picked up a little brown bag of those sugared blue ribbons, which she was currently enjoying as a lunch.

>
 "Goddamit! Why the fuck can't I stay here?" Socrates, as well as more than a few yuppies, turned to stare at the scrawny teenager currently throwing a tantrum at his redheaded guardian.

>
 "Because I said so, that's why. Until we can sort this out I don't think you should be here bothering Skinner and countless others who are trying to get work done." Scully, ever so logical, shot back in a no-nonsense tone. "And since you can't be trusted to stay on your own—" She started to hail a cab.

>
 "You're going to send me to stay with the _ Gunmen _ for a day? Christ, Scully, you know the kind of hard time they're going to give me?"

>
 Socrates had stood at this point and was walking to the agents, a satisfied smirk on her face.

>
 "Tough," Scully replied. "I already called them." A cab pulled up between them. "Now get in," She pulled the back door open.

>
 "Fuck it! This is shit!" Fox was really yelling now, not caring who heard. "I can't believe you don't trust me enough to spend one freaking day in the—"

>
 "Fox, you are making this much harder than this has to be, now if you don't get into this cab right now I'll—" Scully stopped when she noticed a familiar young girl standing next to her, a look of pure disgust on her face.

>
 Socrates stared first at Scully, then over at Fox. She looked really, truly upset, as she looked him up and down. She glanced again at Scully and said, simply, harshly "—Calm down!"

>
 Then, matter-of-factly, she took a sip of her slurpee and slid into the cab. "You coming?" She glanced up at Fox.

>
 "Umâ€|Socrates, is it?" Scully knelt by the open door. "What are you doing?"

>
 "Well," Socrates bit off a piece of her sugary blue ribbon. "I figured that wherever Mulder's going, I could just stay there until I figure out where everyone is. Is it a problem?"

>
 Fox imagined it would be.

>
 "Where are your friends?" Scully asked. Socrates really appeared to think hard about this one.

>
 "Dunno."

>
 "Well, where are you staying?"

>
 Again, the girl appeared to think long and hard. "Dunno."

>
 "You don't know where you're staying?" Fox was still angry at being treated like a damn kid.

>
 "Well, I don't take care of those things. The only person who really knows what's going on is Michael. I figure I'll just follow him around and something's bound to happen. Isn't that what you do with Agent Scully here?"

>
 Fox was startled. He had never thought of it that way. But deep down he knew that he always counted on Scully to take care of him. He'd follow her to hell on trust.

>
 "And I tell ya, you guys are a sight for sore eyes. I'm so glad I found someone I know, 'cause frankly, I'm really somewhere where I don't know where I am, on account of I'm totally and hopelessly lost." The Agents continued to stare at her. "Well come on! Anyplace would be better than YuppieCon 2000 here," She gestured around herself. "You know what I'm talking about," she looked at Fox pointedly. "People here look at me like I'm going to scratch their eyes out and steal their purses. I gotta wad of cash. I'll pay for cab fare, if that's what you want."

>
 Scully noticed that Socrates had the same inability to hold on to one subject for more than thirty seconds as Madison and now, Fox.

>
 Fox glanced up at Scully. "Whatever," He muttered, and slid into the cab next to Socrates.

>

> Fox was surprised the Gunmen had even let Socrates in. After much cajoling and begging, interjected with Socrates reassuring them that she was just as much anti-everything as they were. Besides, she's forget everything she saw in there ten minutes after she left.

> Frohike grumbled after Bryers had begged him into believing the kids.

> "Man, when Scully said Mulder was coming over, I thought it'd be a porn fest, not some babysitting job," He muttered.

> "What? Porn? Huh?" Socrates connected the word with her own self-proclaimed pornographic theatre company. She took a break from her slurpee to glance around herself. "Heyâ€|wait! I know you guysâ€|" She took in the countless old magazine covers. "You guys are The Lone Gunmen?"

>
 "Ahâ€|.yeah," Langly answered as Mulder shuffled through video tapes.

>
 "Dude, Michael reads your magazines all the time! He and Madison don't shut up about you guys," Langly brightened at the compliment.

>
 "Who's Michael?" Frohike asked, suspiciously.

>
 "Michael? What about Michael?" Socrates looked absolutely blank.

>
 "You just said someone named Michael reads our magazines. You

also mentioned a Madison." Frohike bristled.

>
 "I did? Dude, I don't even remember that!" Socrates was surprised.

>
 Frohike thought she was trying to play with his mind. He didn't like it when people did that. "Look, kid, justâ€¦go sit over with your friend."

>
 "Okay," Socrates answered cheerfully, unaware that a scuffle had just taken place.

>
 Fox explained their plight to the Gunmen, interjecting here and there that he really didn't want to be there right now. Socrates said, simply, she was lost and then Fox found her.

>
 "Where are you staying?" Bryers asked, genuinely concerned.

>
 Socrates tried, she honestly tried, to remember. "Dunno."

>
 Langly stepped over to the row of glowing computers. "Who's name is it in? I can probably find where it is."

>
 "Michael Riley. Oh no wait! Try Hannah Cross, too. Word has it that last time Michael was here with his friends he trashed the room so bad, and left so much pot and booze that nobody in DC lets him book a room." She grinned proudly. "That's our Mikey!"

>
 "I see," said Bryers.

>
 While the Gunmen were busy looking for addresses, Socrates and Fox sat on the couch, sharing the last of Socrates' blue ribbons. Talking about, of all things, girls.

>
 "Eww! Britney Spears? You actually like her?" Socrates was disgusted.

>
 The young Mulder shrugged, his mouth currently full of candy. "I dunno. I guess so. I mean, other than porn girls, I like her too."

>
 "But she's so _ fake_," Socrates whined.

>
 "So are all the porn girls," The two laughed. "Why? Who do you like?"

>
 "Nice girls," Socrates said matter-of-factly. "Meg Ryan. Heather Graham. That American Beauty girl," She sighed dreamily. "And Bif Naked. Let's not forget Bif Naked. She's not just the princess of punk because of music, my friend." She winked.

>
 "Who's Bif Naked?" Fox asked, innocently enough. Socrates stared at him. Jessica would have had a heart attack and died on the spot.

>
 "The Princess of Punk? Bif Freaking Naked? You don't know?"

>
 The young Mulder shook his head. "You're deprived," Socrates told him.

>
 "Waitâ€¦" Suddenly Fox was confused. "Aren't you a girl?"

>
 "Yeah. And?"

>
 Fox shrugged, a little taken aback. The only gay people he had known were the couple he and Scully had met on that caseâ€¦and that was bordering on just plain weird.

>
 "Look, Foxieâ€¦can I call you Foxie?" Fox made a face. "Foxie, if there's anyone who's comfortable with their sexuality, it's me. And if you don't feel right talking to me like this, you don't have to. But when it comes to girls, I can be your best friend." She winked again.

>
 Fox tilted his head. "What do you mean?"

>
 "Like that Scully chick for example. You are so obviously in love with her."

>
 "No I'm not!" Fox responded rather vocally.

>
 "Well, you have to admit she's fucking gorgeous, right?" Socrates had him there.

>
 "Wellâ€¦yeah. Sure. She is," Fox realised it was probably the

first time he had said it out loud to someone else.

>
 "So go for it. What do you have to lose?"

>
 "A friendship?" Fox hazarded after a moment.

>
 Socrates looked at him thoughtfully. "Well a good relationship is built on a good friendship, right? And she totally loves you, too."

>
 Fox sighed and threw himself back on the couch. "Doubtful."

>
 "Seriously! Anyone else would have dumped you like a hot coal when all thisâ€" She gestured at his young body. "Happened." Now what's she's doingâ€"that's devotion."

>
 "I guess."

>
 "Well, when you get back to your normal self, ask her out. Or, if things go right, she'll ask you out," Fox glanced up at her. He was still of the generation where the male asked the female for dates. "There's nothing wrong with the girl asking," Socrates cleared up.

>
 "Yeah, but in your current situation, you have no choice."

>
 For some reason, Socrates thought this was hysterical.

>
 The Gunmen came to them with the address to find her rolling on the floor, laughing. "We found it," Langly handed the address to Fox.

>
 Socrates managed to pick herself up and drag herself over to Fox. "Do you know where it is?"

>
 "Yeah. We could go to my place and then I could take you there, on two buses. You still have change?" Socrates nodded.

>
 "Waitâ€"you guys are supposed to stay here. That's what Scully said." Bryers voiced.

>
 "Screw Scully! She's not my fucking mother," Fox stood to go. "Thanks for the help guys. And if Scully comes or asks, just tell her I went with Socky to her place."

>
 "Socky?" Frohike regarded the kids from narrowed eyes.

>
 Socrates just waved at him, cheerfully. Then followed the young Fox Mulder into the Washington sunlight.

>

> To be continued.

>

> * AUTHOR'S NOTE- So there it is. My attempt to add a little counter-culture to the X-Files. Granted, the Lone Gunman and the Smoking Man are about as counter-culture as one can get (read- the Lone Gunman Comedy Hour in Vancouver, and Gastown, the prestigious acting school run by the Smoking Man.) Anyways, in case you couldn't tell, some of these characters were based on my theatre-intense friends, right down to the pot smoke and gas stations. Madison is somewhat based on me- a little wishful thinking, but the start in fringe at fifteen part is true. And hey, if anyone has any tips about what Madison should do about Kevin (a true to life love interest that had been driving me almost to tears in the past few months) please email me! Details in this fic follow a lot of real-life situations. 'Space Age Porn Stars' is the pending name of my improvisation team at Loose Moose Theatre. Some other notes- 'Slightly Bigger Cities' is a recurring reference to Bruce McCulloch for all you KITH fans, and there are some culture references American audiences might not get- ie, Joe Canadian, Twitch City, Trudeau, the Long Weekend Warâ€"although, IMHO, *everybody* should know who Trudeau is. Also, if you're confused about the plastic bag in the belt loop bit, rent 'subUrbia', a wicked movie and even wickeder play! That's all, folks, thanks! *

>
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2. Part

Two